EVALUATION OF THE 2000-01 IN-SCHOOL MENTORING PILOT PROJECT FINAL REPORT

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This document may be of interest to:
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Individuals interested in school improvement
Public or private sector organizations considering supporting the in-school mentoring program

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Executive Summary

The In-School Mentoring pilot project evaluation results are summarized below which convey the positive and negative repercussions of mentoring as expressed in the interviews conducted with Alberta Learning employee in-school mentors. The following observations, gathered from the fifteen participating mentors, provide direction regarding the future of the program.

Establishing Relationships

- Establishing a relationship with the mentee (student) is crucial to the success of mentoring.
- Factors in establishing this relationship include similar interests, consistency in combination with time and the developing of a friendship.
- Eighty-seven percent of the mentors rated the match as working "Very well" or "Well".

Effects on Mentees

- Mentors believed that 90.5% of the benefit of the mentoring program is derived from one on one attention, literacy growth and self-esteem.
- Eighty-nine and a half percent of mentors saw a positive change in the student they were mentoring.
- The effects of the positive changes for the mentees includes motivation, interest, attendance and confidence.
- Literacy growth was perceived in 87.5% of the mentees.
- Two respondents (10.5%) indicated that no positive change was visible in their student.
- There were no observations of negative changes in any of the students.

Effects on Mentors

- Eighty-seven percent of the mentors were satisfied with their experience.
- The greatest amount of personal satisfaction for the mentors came from the students' growth in literacy and knowledge, in attitude and in self-esteem.
- Of the 87% of the mentors satisfied with their experience, all would like to mentor next year.
- Two mentors (13%) indicated that they were disappointed with their experience.
- Forty-six percent of the mentors identified issues that could improve the mentors' experience.
- Eighty-seven and a half percent of the mentees voiced their appreciation to the mentors.
- Ninety-three percent of the mentors found that mentoring transferred directly and/or indirectly to their work as it relates to Alberta Learning's mission.
- The majority of mentors did not think that mentoring interfered with their time at work.
- The time commitment was hard to justify for the two mentors who did not observe growth in their mentee.

Conclusion

The mentoring programs' connection to Alberta Learning's 2001-04 Business Plan strategy. "*Implement the In-School Mentorship program in partnership with the Alberta Big Brothers and Big Sisters and the Edmonton Public Schools*" (page 8), provides an opportunity for staff interested in getting involved to be engaged directly with students in schools. Mentors agree that the experience was very positive and a wonderful opportunity to help students. Mentors express strong support to continue and/ or expand the program in the coming year. In the opinion of the mentors they have effectively made a difference in these students lives.

Introduction

In-School Mentoring is a program primarily designed to help students in the early elementary grades improve their literacy skills. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess whether the mentoring program was beneficial to the employees (mentors) and to the students (mentees) involved. In order to make a fair and a realistic judgment surrounding the value the mentor and mentee derive from their relationship, interviews were completed with each mentor. This report documents the positive and negative repercussions of mentoring as defined in the mentor interviews. This will result in recommendations regarding the future of the program.

Methodology

A set of interviews was conducted with each of the fifteen participating mentors. The interview schedule included the following questions:

A. Impact on the Student
1. How many weeks have you mentored a student?
2. In that period of time what do you think was the most beneficial outcome for your mentee?
3. How much time did it take for you to establish a relationship with your mentee?
4. What types of positive things did you see change in the student you were/are mentoring? Any negatives?
5. Do you think this affected the attitude, attendance, and/or motivation of the student? In you opinion, does the child show a greater interest in school as a result of mentorship?
6. The program is intended to support literacy development in early elementary grades. Do you think your mentee demonstrated literacy growth?
7. Are there any negatives for the student concerning the role of mentoring in their lives?
8. Did you find yourself tutoring the child in other school subjects besides literacy or providing other kinds of support?
9. Do you feel that you have made a difference in this students' life? Has the child vocalized or otherwise indicated his/her appreciation?

B. Impact on the Mentor
10. How did you find out about the mentoring program?
11. What made you decide to become a mentor? Were those expectations met?
12. What gives you the most satisfaction or benefits from mentoring?
13. Are there any disadvantages or sources of dissatisfaction in mentoring a child?
14. What was the most important factor in establishing your relationship with your mentee?
15. How well matched were you and your student?
16. What was the affect of mentoring on your work and your life outside of work?
17. How did mentoring relate to your work?
18. Did you find the commitment too large in terms of the time commitment?
19. Were there times when you had to cancel? How did the student respond?
20. Are you planning on being a mentor next year?
21. How did you find the initial interview? Was it intimidating?
22. How could the mentoring program be improved?
23. Did you try E-mentoring? If yes, was the effectiveness similar to that of direct contact mentoring?
24. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share?

One respondent provided input on two mentees, consequently there are 16 responses for the questions that apply to student outcomes. Multiple responses by mentors have the effect of increasing the response frequencies beyond 15. The interviews were designed to capture each of the mentor's experiences and compare the results in order to clearly define the positive and negative outcomes of the mentoring program. The individual responses were then compared, sorted and coded to identify conclusive patterns in the data, and these findings are described below.

Findings

Establishing Relationships

Mentoring typically began in November and during the 2000-2001 school year mentoring time ranged between 15 and 35 hours per student. The relationship established between mentor and mentee is crucial to the success of mentoring and Table 1 describes the time required to establish a positive relationship with the mentee.

Table 1

Time to Establish Relationship	Total	Percentage
(1) First session	7	44%
(2) Second session	2	13%
(3) Third session	4	25%
(4) Fourth session	1	6%
(5) Not sure if formed one	1	6%
(6) Never	1	6%
Total	**16**	**100%**

The results for the factors mentors described as important in establishing the relationship between the mentor and the mentee are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Factors in Establishing Relationship	Total	Percentage
(1) Similar Interests	4	27%
(2) Consistency and time	3	20%
(3) Developing Friendship	3	20%
(4) Developing Self-confidence	2	13%
(5) Expectations	2	13%
(6) Did not form a relationship	1	7%
Total	**15**	**100%**

Mentors were asked to rate the quality of the match between themselves and the mentee. Eighty-seven percent rated the match as working "Very Well" or "Well".

Table 3

Match between mentor and mentee	Total	Percentage
(1) Very Well	9	56%
(2) Well	5	31%
(3) Not well	1	6%
(4) As well as anyone	1	6%
Total	16	100%

Effects on Mentees

Mentors were asked to define their perceptions of the benefits of mentoring for the mentee. Table 4 demonstrates five main themes pertaining to benefits for the mentee. Findings from the data analysis indicate the three most beneficial outcomes for the students are: one on one attention, literacy growth, and self-esteem development. The mentors believed that 90.5% of the benefit derived from the mentoring program is based on these three results.

Table 4

Beneficial Outcome	Total	Percentage
(1) One on one attention	9	42.9%
(2) Literacy growth	6	28.6%
(3) Self-esteem	4	19.0%
(4) Consistency	1	4.8%
(5) Motivation	1	4.8%
Total	**21**	**100%**

Table 5 shows 89.5% of the mentors saw positive change in the student they were mentoring. As noted in the table below, the main types of positive results observed in the students are increased reading skills and reading interest, and increased self-confidence. Students seemed to be happier in general, possibly due to the special attention they received.

Table 5

Positive Changes in Students	Total	Percentage
(1) Increased reading interest	4	21.1%
(2) Increased reading skills	4	21.1%
(3) Increased self-confidence	4	21.1%
(4) Felt special	2	10.5%
(5) Happier in general	2	10.5%
(6) No changes	2	10.5%
(7) Increased anger management	1	5.3%
Total	19	100%

Mentors were asked to explore the impact of mentoring on the student's attitudes. Table 6 describes the effects of the positive changes for the mentees.

Table 6

Effects on Attitude/ Attendance/ Motivation/ Interest	Total	Percentage
(1) Increased Motivation Levels	7	31.8%
(2) Increased Interest	6	27.3%
(3) Unknown	5	22.7%
(4) Improved Attendance	2	9.1%
(5) Higher Levels of Self -Confidence	1	4.5%
(6) None	1	4.5%
Total	22	100%

Table 7 indicates **87.5%** of the mentees exhibited **literacy growth** as perceived by the mentor. An improvement in literacy growth is one of the main goals pertaining to the success of the in-school mentoring project and therefore is one of the more critical consequential issues surrounding this project.

Table 7

Literacy Growth	Total	Percentage
(1) Yes	12	75.0%
(2) Some	2	12.5%
(3) No	2	12.5%
Total	**16**	**100%**

Two mentors had difficulty establishing a connection with their mentee resulting in no visible positive change in their student. As mentioned earlier in the report a connection between the mentor and the mentee is a key factor in enabling a process of change in the student. At the same time, this is somewhat speculative, as the mentee may have been affected in positive ways that are not visible immediately to the mentor.

There were no observations of negative changes in the students. As well, there were no observed negative aspects in the program concerning the students. However, the mentors reported that there were some potential negative results, for example, the student becoming attached to a mentor and the mentor retiring, but none of these potential outcomes were observed by the mentors to have been experienced by the students.

Effects on Mentors

Eighty-seven percent of the mentors were satisfied with their experience in developing a relationship with the mentee, honoring the commitment and observing educational growth. Eighty percent of the members indicated their expectations were exceeded or met (Table 8).

Table 8

Expectations Met	Total	Percentage
(1) Exceeded	2	13%
(2) Met	10	67%
(3) Mostly met	1	7%
(4) Did not meet	2	13%
Total	**15**	**100%**

Mentors found the greatest amount of personal satisfaction to come from the students' growth in literacy and knowledge, in attitude and in self-esteem. Table 9 demonstrates seven reasons for satisfaction with mentoring, including the importance of growth in the mentee as a key aspect for the mentors' satisfaction.

Table 9

Satisfaction from Mentoring	Total	Percentage
(1) Impact on student growth	10	59%
(1.a) Literacy and knowledge	6	
(1.b) Attitude	3	
(1.c) Self -esteem	2	
(2) Developing relationship/ appreciating each other	4	24%
(3) Honoring commitment/ meeting expectations	1	6%
(4) No satisfaction	2	12%
Total	**17**	**100%**

Of the 87% of mentors satisfied with their experience, all would like to mentor next year. Some of the mentors expressed concern for the uncertain future of the In-School Mentoring program. These mentors expressed their interest in mentoring next year, but felt the program was not definite. The mentors could not assure their mentee whether they would be continuing with mentoring the same student the following school year, nor could they respond in a definitive manner in the interview. Students were definitive in showing some type of appreciation, 14 out of 16 or 87.5% of the mentees voiced their appreciation to the mentors.

Thirteen percent of mentors were disappointed because of a lack of connection with the mentee that lead to no observable change in the student. In these few instances the student was difficult to reach and the mentors felt that these particular students needed a different type of help; something more intense than one hour per week of mentoring.

Forty-six percent of the mentors identified issues that could improve the mentors' experience. Most of these issues came from the fact that the mentors wanted to see more progress in the students and/ or the program limited the activities of the mentor and mentee. Mentors sometimes expressed frustration with restrictions placed on mentor/ mentee activities, such as computer/ internet access, which had the effect of limiting the application of mentors' creative ideas to help the student learn.

Table 10

Vocalized Appreciation to Mentor	Total	Percentage
(1) Yes	14	87.5%
(1.a) Asked if mentor was going to return next year	3	
(1.b) Asked to come more often	2	
(1.c) Gave cards/ gifts to mentor	3	
(1.d) Happy to see/ runs to mentor/ gives hugs	5	
(1.e) Upset by mentors absence	1	
(1.f) Choose mentor over recess	1	
(1.g) Wanted to take mentors picture	1	
(2) No	2	12.5%
Total	**16**	**100%**

When asked about work relationships, Alberta Learning staff found mentoring to be a positive connection to work as it relates to Alberta Learning's mission. Thirteen of the 14 mentors (only 14 mentor's responded to this question) found that mentoring transferred directly and/ or indirectly to their work. Mentoring gave the Alberta Learning staff hands-on experience in the field allowing them to return with a better understanding regarding clients and teachers, and with a better consideration of curriculum.

Table 11

Relation to work	Total	Percentage
(1) Transfers over directly	10	71.4%
(1.a) Informs the job/ good hands-on experience	7	
(1.b) Enriches work/ see benefits	2	
(1.c) Manager - mentoring all the time	1	
(2) Transfers over indirectly	3	21.4%
(2.a) Relates to AB Learning's mission	3	
(3) Did not relate	1	7.1%
(3.a) Work division	1	
Total	**14**	**100%**

The majority of the mentors did not think that mentoring interfered with their time at work. They found an hour to be a minimal time commitment away from work. The majority of mentors work through or leave on their lunch break to limit their time away from work.

Table 12

Time Commitment	Total	Percentage
(1) Large	3	20.0%
(1.a) Conflicted with work and meetings	2	
(1.b) Felt problem for supervisor - part-time employee	1	
(2) Not large	12	80.0%
(2.a) Conflicted with work and meetings	3	
(2.b) Hard to justify	1	
Total	**15**	**100%**

Relating back to the situation for two mentors of **no** initial connection with the mentee, and the disappointment it causes, this also relates to the time commitment being hard to justify for these mentors. As they did not see any progress in the student, these mentors also found it hard to justify the time off work.

Issues

1. Should mentoring be a higher priority in the workplace?

   The interview responses indicated it was hard to get away from the office at times due to conflicting meetings and work. Supervisor's support is a crucial foundation for support staff to become mentors.

2. Is the initial interview too intimidating?

   A personal interview is performed with each mentor to match him/her with a suitable mentee. This interview is quite in-depth and was found to be somewhat intimidating by 27% of the mentors. However, 14 of the 15 mentors found the interview to be necessary for the protection of the students. Only one found the depth questionable.

3. Do mentors need more guidance?

   An increase in guidance from coordinators and/or other mentors is needed to direct the mentors in order to focus on the specific literary needs of the student. It is noted several times in the interview responses that more guidance would be of value to the mentor.

4. Is e-mail or fax a more reliable method of contacting the students?

In cases where a mentor had to change the planned mentoring schedule communications with the teacher and mentee was sometimes problematic. Some clarification of preferred modes of communication would be beneficial.

Recommendations

1. The majority of the mentors were informed of the opportunity to mentor through a departmental e-mail. More proactive means to encourage staff to participate and to encourage supervisors to support their staff in this endeavor are desirable. A higher priority flag may be needed for the program, especially for support staff interested in becoming involved.
2. Since the interview is necessary for the protection and safety of the student, prepare, in advance, staff members to anticipate the depth, intent and the use of interview material to remove some of the potential apprehension with this process.
3. Over 50% of the mentors suggested that the program could be improved through more teacher contact. In schools with a mentor coordinator, the coordinator, and if not, the principal, should provide active liaison between the classroom teacher and the mentor. One third of the mentors also suggested that a brainstorming meeting be held occasionally to share ideas of successful mentoring.
4. E-mail or fax might be a more efficient way to supplement communication between mentor, mentee and the school.

Conclusion

The mentoring programs' connection to Alberta Learning provides an opportunity for staff interested in getting involved to be engaged with students in schools. The program gives staff an opportunity to directly help students in the field. The overall feedback from the mentors involved in the In-School Mentoring program is very positive. The general feedback is that the program gives a wonderful learning experience. Mentors express strong support to continue and/or expand the program in the coming year. In the opinion of the mentors they have effectively made a difference in these students lives.